



The Path to Washington *Convening leaders for an ecologically sustainable America*

Project framework and guidance for partners

The goal of the Path to Washington (PtW) is to produce a Report to the Nation in fall 2009 on legal and policy tools which can help solve our country's serious environmental problems, improve ecological conditions, sustain communities and enhance our quality of life. The Path to Washington began in 2005. It is a grass-roots-up (or outside-Beltway-in) process to describe America's ecological needs, to confirm that business, NGOs, government, and citizens want to cooperate to meet those needs and to offer ideas and policies that make improvement happen. The PtW is projected to include 36 dialogues, 12 projects and white papers, and 4 national workshops. All of the above will create records for public review and content for the Report to the Nation. Those interested in dialogues or the national workshops should consult www.mswg.org/Path_to_Washington for more on those activities.

This document concerns PtW projects. A PtW project can build off a past study, practice, policy or idea that is especially relevant now. Since about 1988, ideas on "next generation" environmental policy have surfaced, and studies, public input processes, think tank projects and experiments have taken place at local, state, regional and national levels. Perhaps some of these ideas are ones whose time has now come. Or, a PtW project can be a brand-new idea or approach. Please see more discussion of this below.

Since its inception in 1996, MSWG has always depended upon volunteers and partners – that's you, that's all of us! So of course, the Path to Washington needs you and your peers to lead PtW projects. This document will help you develop a project that contributes to the PtW while meeting some of your own needs.

What is a PtW Project?

Within its chosen scope, a project must answer each of these general PtW questions:

- What is the ecological need - locally, regionally or nationally? This question invites communities, citizens, experts and groups to describe what could happen "if only" we could reach beyond the status quo;
- How can policy empower leaders (e.g., communities, business, citizens, others) to address those needs? This question addresses incentives, barriers or tools regarding the "how to leverage" question;
- If Washington does not act, what can we do now? Are there things that local and state governments, associations or communities could do right now if they had the information?

Once you've chosen a PtW project scope and framed it within the questions above (and others if you see fit), please consider if you can go beyond theory to determine what functions would be necessary for implementation, for instance: standards and metrics; public or private regulation, evaluation, or verification; education or assistance; incentives (monetary or recognition); market adjustment (tax, fee, infrastructure development); etc..

How do I propose a PtW project?

A PtW project need not be complicated or costly. But it should be credible by virtue of the ideas it presents, its

"A small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." -- Margaret Mead

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clarity and the collaboration that went into it. A project is by definition more focused and more in-depth than a dialogue, although reaching out for input or comment is important to project success. Here's a suggested approach if you want to proceed:

1. Review the PtW web page at www.mswg.org/Path_to_Washington to learn what came before, what's happening now and what is planned. If you have an extra moment look back at some of the presentations at past workshops or projects of the Policy Academy when it was in operation.
2. Come up with your project idea and bounce it off Jeff Smoller, MSWG president, at Jeffrey.Smoller@wisconsin.gov who will tell you about the "fit." Discuss your needs, too. Then write it up: state the issue and how it will be researched, vetted and supported financially or by volunteers, and what your intended timeline for basic milestones will be. Show us how costs are covered and who you intend to recruit for your team (users, practitioners, researchers, stakeholders, facilitators, etc.), so you have the expertise and enthusiasm needed to develop the challenge and possible solutions, including policy. (Sponsors may be recognized through various MSWG outlets.)

Members of the MSWG network will approve proposals for PtW match and feasibility, and (subject to your approval) will propose to plug themselves and MSWG's collective resources into your project to add value to the project. Once we've agreed on your approach, implementation can begin:

1. Develop and implement the research and dialogue plan.
2. Produce the result – a white paper or other descriptive product - that concisely describes the problem and solution, documents the input you received through outreach and dialogue, and identifies next steps for research, dialogue, development or implementation. The paper will be posted on the MSWG web page.
3. Produce practical advice (maybe in the paper or a separate presentation or guidance) for communities and target audiences to follow in the event Washington is silent on your problem or recommendations.
4. Select a spokesperson to present the project at a workshop or other event.

Ideally, your project will be concluded by fall, 2009 for inclusion in the Report to the Nation. It may continue after that but interim reporting is recommended for the PtW report.

What are some PtW project topics?

Here is a menu of project topics generated from PtW discussions, past "next-generation" policy projects, experimental programs, think-tank reports and as a result of conditions that have changed in the last 30 years.

Evaluating "Performance-Based" Programs*
 The Future of Performance-Based Programs
 Product Stewardship: New Standards and Programs
 Ecosystem Services: Definition, Valuation, Legal Frameworks
 Environmental Impact Review through NEPA#
 Sniff Test II (do innovation programs pass muster?)*#
 The Vocabulary of Future Environmental Policy*#
 Dept of Defense Facilities as Working Lands
 Watershed- or Estuary-Focused Programs#
 New Legal Frameworks which Support Improvement*#
 Measuring Environmental Outcomes & Related Performance*
 Local Land Use and Conservation Zoning#
 Approaching Issues using a Portfolio of Tools

Ecological Restoration
 The State and Future of Industrial Ecology#
 Collaborative Governance & Results*#
 Supply Chains
 Business Governance Mechanisms
 Third Party Engagement
 Market Drivers*
 Reuniting Public and Environmental Health
 Brownfield and Urban Revival
 Advanced Ecological Thinking*#
 Technology and Innovation
 Leveraging "at the Edge" (Center-Edge theory)

Project linked to MSWG Glen Ellen ecological retreat

* Project linked to MSWG Chicago meeting

This list of projects is designed to stimulate your thinking about the wide range of scale, scope, and content area possible in PtW projects. Clearly, any project that addresses the PtW core questions can fit in.